

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Eric Linh. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut's SB2: *An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic*.

This bill permits parents to attend parent-teacher conferences remotely, which highly resonates with me. My parents were very busy with work as I was growing up, and were forced to take time off work in order to make these parent-teacher conferences. By permitting remote conferences, this bill acknowledges and alleviates the burdens on families who might not be able to afford to attend these conferences live.

Additionally, this bill permits minors to receive more than six outpatient mental health treatment sessions without the consent of a parent or guardian. This is crucial for minors who come from environments where it might not be safe to discuss mental health issues with parents or guardians, and serves to prioritize their well-being. Organizations have been pushing for years to secure better mental health services for students, and mental health is often under-addressed and services are inaccessible for people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges students face every day. The effects of this pandemic, especially in children and adolescents will be felt for years, even after everyone has returned to in-person learning. SB2 seeks to address mental health challenges of CT's students by establishing mental health training for many school employees and licensed healthcare professionals. Funding data shows that lower-income students and students of color are disproportionately impacted by the current lack of mental health access in schools. As a first generation college student who went to a school full of peers with parents who had higher education, I often felt as though I had to work that much harder to keep up. Sometimes, the work had deteriorated my mental health, and I wished that my school had licensed healthcare professionals to help students deal with their mental health. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in addressing and improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,

Eric Linh
New Haven, CT